

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

CHARLES D. WILLIAMS)	
)	
COMPLAINANT)	
)	
v.)	CASE NO. 94-259
)	
FARMERS RURAL ELECTRIC)	
COOPERATIVE CORPORATION)	
)	
DEFENDANT)	

O R D E R

On July 6, 1994, Charles D. Williams filed a complaint against Farmers Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation ("Farmers RECC"), alleging that Farmers RECC has violated Commission Regulation 807 KAR 5:006, Section 13(1)(a), which states that "[e]ach utility shall maintain a telephone, shall publish the telephone number in all service areas, and shall permit all customers to contact the utility's designated representative without charge." Mr. Williams maintains that Farmers RECC has three telephone numbers its customers can call (651-2191, 773-5033, and 773-5043) and that each of these numbers is a long-distance call for Farmers RECC customers, like Mr. Williams, who reside in Bonnieville, Kentucky.

For his relief Mr. Williams requests that the Commission order Farmers RECC to maintain a toll-free number for the convenience of its Bonnieville customers and that the utility be required to refund all monies paid by its Bonnieville customers for service-related calls to Farmers RECC in the past five years.

The Commission directed Farmers RECC to satisfy or answer Mr. Williams' complaint by July 25, 1994. Farmers RECC filed its answer on July 25, 1994, affirming that it publishes the three phone numbers cited by Mr. Williams. The defendant states that these three numbers "enable approximately 90 percent of Farmers RECC's customers to call without a long-distance charge to either the customer or the cooperative." (Answer, p. 2). It states that its practice has been to accept collect calls from customers residing in the Bonnieville exchange. The Commission finds that this practice appears to fulfill the requirements of 807 KAR 5:006, Section 13(1)(a) since that regulation only requires that customers have a method by which to contact the utility at no charge.

At the same time, the Commission believes that the method of accepting collect calls from customers is not useful if the customers are unaware such calls will be accepted. Since Farmers RECC has not informed its customers of this practice for a period of four years, it is likely that many of them do not know they may make free calls to the utility. Farmers RECC states that it intends to obtain an 800 number within the next 30 days to solve this problem. If an 800 number is obtained, Farmers RECC should immediately notify its customers. If Farmers RECC chooses not to obtain an 800 number for its Bonnieville customers, it should immediately notify those customers that they may make service or billing-related collect calls to the company. The free calls should not be restricted to those involving service outage reports


as was indicated on one of the bills Farmers RECC attached to its answer.


The Commission does not have the authority to award civil damages to Complainants in complaint cases. It is unfortunate that Mr. Williams was unaware of the defendant's practice of accepting collect calls, but the Commission cannot order Farmers RECC to reimburse Mr. Williams, or other customers, for the costs they incurred by paying telecommunications utilities for past calls to Farmers RECC.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that, within 15 days from the date of this Order, Farmers RECC provide the Commission with evidence showing it has obtained an 800 number, or continues to accept collect calls from Bonnieville customers, and has notified its customers of this fact.

Done at Frankfort, Kentucky, this 31st day of August, 1994.

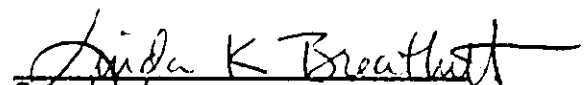
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION


Chairman


Vice Chairman

ATTEST:


Executive Director


Commissioner